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# aul and Apollos and Cephas

by JOHN H. KROMMINGA*

For the Christian Reformed ch, which we may call our spirit- mother, we share a common love. feel that we owe it to her to put lves out for her welfare. We wish e alerted when any danger arises ch threatens her. It is on that com- basis of love that I speak to you t the welfare of our church. I am g to speak about some things that ve seen and heard, which disturb deeply. I want to explain what I heard, and why it disturbs me, what I think we ought to do about

ot very long ago I heard a reason- intelligent and prominent man ussing a *Banner* article in which he read what ministers were to come Synod from a certain classis. He tioned these men by name, and ex- ssed gratification that they were g delegated, because they could be nted on to decide the important is- in the right way. His attitude was terribly wrong in itself; but some- g about the spirit in which he spoke ned just a little bit off color. A lit- warning bell began to sound in my d—not very loudly, but just loud ugh to be heard.

But then, less than a week later, I rd someone else speak on the same ject. He mentioned the same two men who were coming to synod, and said that he had been very worried when he read about their coming. But he went on to say, "When I read the report of another classis, I wasn't worried so much any more, because two men from our side were delegated from that classis. I hope others from our side are sent." Now the alarm bell began to jangle loudly. When I questioned him on his attitude, he maintained that there are two schools of thought among us. I would not deny that; I think it is true, to a certain degree. But he seemed to feel no embarrassment at all at openly identifying himself with a party and hoping for its victory. That is what has me worried.

Let me state a bit more plainly just what I am worried about and what I am not worried about. I am not worried about the fact that there are certain individuals among us who hold positive opinions on certain subjects. It doesn't worry me at all that they express these opinions positively and openly. It is not a bad sign at all that they express their agreement or disagreement with each other. All of this is not wrong at all, but necessary and good. If there were nothing of this sort going on in the church, it would be the surest sign that the church was intellectually dead. Open and frank discussion is not a danger, but a sign of health. It is vital to the life of the church.

But our situation threatens to go beyond this, in the surrender to the party spirit. The threat of that danger lies imbedded in the very idea of loading a committee, slanting a trio, packing a synod with the "right" people and the

(Address delivered before a mass meeting the Grand Rapids League of Reformed n's Societies, March 25, 1954.)

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# Paul and Apollos and Cephas — Continued

"right" ideas. When we examine the list of delegates to synod, the names of the sponsors of a meeting, the names on the masthead of a magazine, and immediately jump to conclusions about what side of "the fence" these organizations or meetings are going to be on —then make no mistake; Paul and Apollos and Cephas have been resurrected from the Corinthian Church in a manner which promises nothing but trouble for the Church of Jesus Christ. At that point we may well ask ourselves anew, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" When we are no longer satisfied with inquiring whether a man has reasonable intelligence and ability and integrity, but have to ask further what camp he represents; then we have begun to walk a road on which we may serve self and party, but on which we cannot serve the Church and Christ.

This is the party spirit. There are two things I want to say about the party spirit. In the first place, it is forbidden, and in the second place, it is fatal. I hope and expect that when I am through saying those two things about the party spirit, you will all agree with me that it is something which we ought to fight against with all the force at our disposal.

* * *

THE party spirit is forbidden. We can be brief about proving this, because we can go directly to Scripture for our proof, and can find it easily and plainly there. The first few chapters of I Corinthians are pretty well preoccupied with this subject. Paul plunges into the subject as soon as the introductory verses of the first chapter are finished, and he never quite gets out of it until he is well into the fourth chapter. Among the serious evils and shortcomings in the Corinthian Church, this is the one that he attends to first, and to which he devotes some of his most vivid and effective writing.

The party spirit is forbidden. It is not only forbidden to leaders to go around trying to arouse parties. It is forbidden to the laymen in the church to pick their favorite leaders and divide themselves on a partisan basis.

The party spirit is forbidden because it makes the Church poorer than it ought to be. All things are yours. Not Paul or Apollos or Cephas, but Paul and Apollos and Cephas.

The party spirit is forbidden because it dishonors Christ. Neither Paul nor Apollos nor Cephas was crucified for you. All things are yours, *and ye are Christ's.*

The party spirit is forbidden because it obscures God. Who is Paul, and who is Apollos? One plants, the other waters, but God gives the increase. Ye are God's husbandry; ye are God's building. Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ. All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's!

It is an odd thing that under the pretext of glorifying God more fully we can obscure God's glory. But that is exactly what we do when we surrender to the party spirit.

Whoever follows this spirit exalts man. And he does so at the cost of dishonoring Christ, impoverishing and rending the Church which is His Body, defiling the temple of God, and worshipping the creature rather than the Creator.

Is it any wonder that the party spirit is forbidden? We need not think that we shall get off lightly if we walk this road. For then we are denying the Father who made us, the Son who redeemed us, and the Spirit who dwells in us. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

* * *

THAT is pretty much the same as saying what we are going to say now; that the party spirit is fatal. It is fatal, of course, just because it is forbidden. The way of obedience is the way of life, but the way of disobedience is the way of death. Not as an arbitrary punishment, but as a law of cause and effect comes the warning, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." But it may be illuminating to trace just a few of the ways by which this death creeps up on us.


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1. The party spirit is fatal because it is the way of heresy and schism. I am not saying that it is wrong to separate ourselves from an evil fellowship for the sake of the truth. But this is not at all what the party spirit accomplishes. On the contrary, it obscures the truth. Every heretic, it is said, has his elements of truth. But in his preoccupation with one element, he loses sight of the whole truth; his one track becomes a side track. And this is precisely what the party spirit fosters. And the schisms to which it leads are legion; for once this evil infests a society, it must divide and re-divide. The truth once rent may easily be torn in two again. On the basis of a wrong principle, there is no lack of leaders whom we may follow along the paths ways of endless, dreary division.

2. The party spirit is fatal because it ignores and by-passes the proper standards and procedures. We have established standards by which to judge the truth and its distinction from error, and we have established machinery by which to make those judgments and apply them. The standards in our list are noble and imposing. In the order of their importance, they are the following: the divinely inspired Word of God; the great creeds which are our heritage—the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed.

Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg
techism, and the Canons of Dort;
Church Order by which our denom-
tional activity is regulated; and
g-established and hallowed custom.
*ose* are the standards; not what Tom,
ck, or Harry says.

We have established machinery also.
e starting-point of that machinery is
mething very un-mechanical. It is
rule of Matthew 18, which ought
be so familiar to all of us that there
no need of repeating it. "If thy
other hath aught against thee, go and
ow him his fault between thee and
n alone; if he hear thee, thou hast
ined thy brother." The established
chinery operates by means of frank
d brotherly discussion. And if this
es not avail, it follows the course of
tion through consistory, classis, and
nod—that all things may be done de-
ntly and in good order.

But the party spirit by-passes those
ngs. It sets up human standards,
bjective standards, in place of those
nich are legally adopted. And its
ethods are the methods of darkness.
skulks in the shadows. It spies to
in information and lies to pass it on.
breeds and spreads suspicion, it whis-
rs and gossips, it lobbies and pres-
rizes. It circulates mass petitions
r the performance of ecclesiastical
ts, it sends letters with vague innu-
do to the consistories of the denom-
ation, it distributes unidentified ar-
cles in envelopes with no return ad-
ess. It sets up idols as its standard,
nd bears false witness as its method,
nd therefore it is fatal.

3. The party spirit is fatal because
means that we have stopped think-
g. It tends to mean this even in the
olitical sphere, but it does so even
ore in the religious sphere. I don't
now how you feel about politics, but
hen I notice that a lawmaker has be-
ome a strictly party-line man, I lose
espect for him. I suspect that he has
topped thinking. I fear that he has
xchanged a higher loyalty—to country
–for a lower loyalty—to party. I feel
hat he is not considering issues, but
otes. In the last analysis, he is not
orking for the country at large, nor
ven for the people who elected him,
ut for himself.

Perhaps the lawmaker has an ex-
use. He has to answer to the people
nd he has to make concessions to the
ules of political life. But we have no excuse. Our loyalty is to Christ, we have to answer to God, and our rules are the rules of spiritual life. The better we remember these things, the healthier and happier we will be.

What do we mean, then, by saying that the party spirit marks the end of our thinking? We mean that the party spirit does not weigh and measure and evaluate issues; it only counts noses and considers men. This may well suit the mood of modern man, who has been described as a "mass-man" who has to have his thinking done for him, with the results handed to him in capsule form. But it is the death-knell of the Christian Church.

This party spirit is so far from evaluating issues that it brings together strange bedfellows, who are bound together by nothing more than their opposition to someone else. What happens, then, when that opponent is put out of the way? Why, they proceed to fight among themselves. They can't help it, for that is what inevitably happens when the principle of action is not the truth, but a person; not the Creator, but the creature. And when we stop thinking as a Church, we stop growing, we stop serving, we stop living.

4. The party spirit is fatal because it is a pernicious thing which sucks even the innocent and sincere into itself. I think many honest men have discovered that if they do not put themselves into a party, someone else will do that for them. People with whom they have agreed on one issue will act shocked, dismayed, and reproachful if they express disagreement on some other issue. Instead of being honored for acting according to conviction, they find themselves snubbed because they have not been blindly loyal to a person. They discover that it is a lonely life to act according to conviction and principle; there is a certain sort of comradeship of the herd spirit which they cannot share.

These earnest individuals may also find themselves the victims of that climate of public opinion which is only too ready to pigeonhole a man. Once he has expressed an opinion on a subject, he finds himself branded with every other view of the party whose opinion it is.

Or there is another way in which the party spirit sucks a person in. If he continually confronts a well-organized and highly vocal party—let us say the party of Apollos—and finds that party persistently trying to force the church to follow its line, he finds that in the interests of balance and fairness and truth he is siding repeatedly with the party of Cephas. But suddenly one day he discovers that he has been saying what Cephas said on some issue, not because he has thought it through, but simply because Cephas says so. If at that juncture he reproaches himself, and asks himself soberly, "What am I doing?" then there is hope for him. But if he sighs wearily, gives up the fight, and takes the course of least resistance, the disease of schism and heresy has added another victim to its rolls.

5. And this spirit is fatal, finally, because it marks the difference between a Church and a sect. Our church has sometimes been called a sect by our critics. We are not a sect. We are a Church. We are a Church because we stand on the basis of historic Christianity, which is at once narrow and broad. It is so narrow that it will not tolerate any denial of the sovereignty of God. But it is also so broad that it doesn't want that rule of God narrowed down and streamlined to something less than it really is.

Those great creeds, and the Word on which they are based, have kept our Church from being a sect. They have made us wiser and broader and stronger than we could have been if we had had to chart our course ourselves. It is not the brilliance of individual intellect which has given us our place in the kingdom; if it were we could not have the place we now occupy. We are what we are because of the faith once for all delivered unto the saints.

But at the moment when we adopt a narrower basis than the creeds give us; when we apply lower standards than they provide; when we make additional tests, as if they were not good enough; then we are acting like a sect, selling our birthright, and repudiating that which makes strong and rich. We ought not to be broader than our creeds; that is modernism, or liberalism. But we ought also to guard against being narrower than they, for that is sectarianism. When we make either mistake, we have thrown away

# Paul and Apollos and Cephas — Continued

the rudder, and there is no telling where we may drift.

* * *

It is a dark picture which I have sketched, isn't it? I admit this, but I will not apologize for it. I have not made any attempt to soften the impact of my accusations against the party spirit, because I hate it. The party spirit, by exalting man, manifests a hatred of God. It is a tool in the hands of the arch-enemy of the kingdom of light, who well knows how to use the strategy of "divide and conquer." It therefore becomes valid to say with the palmist, "Do I not hate them that hate thee, O Lord? I hate them with a perfect hatred."

I fear the party spirit too. I fear it not only because of what it can do to the church, or because of what it can do to you, but—call it selfishness if you will—because of what it threatens to do to me. I do not dare to say to you, "Be ye imitators of me." For this spirit tempts me as well as it does you or anyone else. I pray that I may not fall victim to it. And I hope that my friends and critics will be frank and honest with me when they suspect that I am falling victim to it. And so my emotions have certainly entered into what I have said. Love for the Church, hatred of its enemies, and fear of a dread disease have made me speak as I have.

But what, then, is the course of profit and safety for the Church? What does the Church need? The Church needs a position which is above party. She needs both leaders and followers who look beyond persons to Christ, count all else as loss for His sake, and are willing to leave even their families for Christ and the Gospel. The Church needs that party, if you can call it a party. In fact, that party *is* the Church. And that party will be the biggest and strongest party, no matter how few people are in it, because it has God on its side.

The Church needs such leaders, because those who love the Lord need somebody to follow. The Church needs such members, because only the existence of such a membership will demand, and thus produce such leadership. The true members of the Church, then, must love Christ above all. And then they must cultivate their own ability to discriminate, to discern, to follow issues and not men. That ability is fast becoming a lost art; but nothing will save us when it is gone. Only thus will the members of the Church be able to avoid the fate of being blind followers of blind leaders.

We need Paul and Apollos and Cephas; the one to plant, the second to water, the third to pull up the weeds. Not Paul alone, nor Paul and Apollos alone, but Paul and Apollos and Cephas. And yet not Paul and Apollos and Cephas alone either; but all of them planting Christ, building on Christ, preaching Christ.

If I am to give a confession of faith, this is the one I want to give. If I am to be a member of any party, this is the party to which I wish to belong. If I must be all alone in my devotion to Christ, this is still the course I must choose; this is the richest fellowship still. If this is a lack of conviction, then there is something wrong with our definition of conviction.

But let us not be morbid about the matter. We not only hope and pray—we *believe* that the Christian Reformed Church is not willing to be a party church, a mere sect among sects. We rejoice that when we speak thus to others, they say, "That is what I believe too." But then we ought to be on our guard, lest suddenly some day we discover that the only choice remaining to us is the choice between one party and the other.

*Wherefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;*

*And ye are Christ's;*
*And Christ is God's.*

---

It appeared to me that there was nothing in Holiness but what was ravishingly lovely; the highest beauty and amiableness — a divine beauty. Holiness appeared to me to be of a sweet, pleasant, charming, serene, calm nature; which brought an inexpressible purity, brightness, peacefulness, and ravishment to the soul. In other words, that it made the soul like a field or garden of God, with all manner of pleasant flowers; enjoying a sweet calm, and the gently vivifying beams of the sun. The soul of a true Christian appeared like such a little white flower as we see in the spring of the year; low and humble on the ground, opening its bosom to receive the pleasant beams of the sun's glory; rejoicing, as it were, in a calm rapture; diffusing around a sweet fragrancy; standing peacefully and lovingly, in the midst of other flowers round about; all in like manner opening their bosoms to drink in the light of the sun.

—Jonathan Edwards

# saiah's Virgin Oracle

by F. F. BRUCE*

RECENT discussion in The *Re-med Journal* of the proper render-g of the Hebrew term *'almah* in Isa. 14 has prompted the following con-leration of the passage in the light its immediate and wider contexts.

## 1. The Occasion

THE YEAR 734 B. C. was one of rious crisis for the kingdom of Ju-h. The aggressive imperialism of As-ria under Tiglath-pileser III (745-726 C.) threatened the independence of small states to the west, along the editerranean seaboard of Syria and lestine. Some were disposed to bow the inevitable and accept the Assyr-n overlordship as the lesser of two ils; burdensome as it was, it was not burdensome as the treatment meted t by Assyria to those who resisted or belled. But others determined to pre-nt a united front against the Assyrian vance. Some years previously Tig-h-pileser had marched west, and the ngs of Damascus and Samaria, Rezin and Menahem respectively, were nong many who paid him tribute. he house of Menahem, however, had bsequently been overthrown by the urper Pekah, son of Remaliah, whose licy was actively anti-Assyrian. In ite of his former submission to Tig-h-pileser, Rezin made common cause th Pekah, and they aimed at build-g up a strong anti-Assyrian coalition western states. Ahaz, who had re-ntly succeeded to the throne of Ju-h, was invited to join the anti-Assyr-n front, but refused. Rezin and Pekah emed the adhesion of Judah essential, ecause Judah's control of Edom ould extend the united front as far uth as the Gulf of Akaba. If Judah ould not join the coalition voluntar-y, coercion must be used. So a joint yro-Ephraimite force set out against dah, intending to depose Ahaz and place him by a puppet-ruler, Ben-abeel. Edom took advantage of Ju-ah's peril to reclaim her independence; hile in Jerusalem king and people ike were filled with panic.

There was one man in Jerusalem, however, who did not share the common panic. This man was the prophet Isaiah, who had already learned the lesson which he never wearied of impressing upon his fellow-countrymen, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." At the divine command Isaiah went out of the city to accost King Ahaz as he was inspecting the security of Jerusalem's water supply, and he took with him his young son Shear-jashub whose very name ("A remnant will return") spoke of the certainty of the promise of God. When he came to the place where the king was, Isaiah addressed him in God's name and told him not to be afraid of Rezin and Pekah—two torches that had blazed fiercely for a short time but were now almost burned out. Far from carrying out their hostile plans against Ahaz, these two kings were on the brink of ruin themselves, together with their kingdoms. Let Ahaz and his people but put their trust in God and His message, and they would never be shaken.

But Ahaz seemed reluctant to accept the prophet's assurance. He was therefore urged to ask for a sign which would confirm it; let him ask for any sign he chose, high as heaven, deep as Sheol. But in pretended piety he refused to put God to the test. In actual fact, he had already formed his policy: he would enlist the aid of Tiglath-pileser. A foolish policy: ordinary political prudence might have taught him that Tiglath-pileser would in any case march west as soon as he could and deal with this anti-Assyrian coalition. Ahaz's call would not bring him any sooner, but it would ensure that Tiglath-pileser's attention was attracted to Judah, which would consequently sink to the level of an Assyrian vassal-kingdom. Ahaz said nothing of all this, for he knew full well that such a policy would be approved neither by Jehovah nor by His prophet. But Isaiah probably divined the king's intention: perhaps with his inward eye he discerned the ambassadors already on their way to present their master's humble petition at the Assyrian court. Hence the severity of his following words to Ahaz:

> Hear ye now, O house of David: Is it a small thing for you to weary men, that ye will weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, the *'almah* shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, when he knoweth to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken. Jehovah will bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—even the king of Assyria (Isa. 7:13-17).

For the moment we leave the word *'almah* untranslated, as its translation is the point at issue. The immediate application of the prophet's words is plain enough. Suppose that a child were to be conceived in the very near future, and to be brought to birth in due course; before that child was old enough to say "Yes" to what was good and "No" to what was not, desolation would have overtaken both the confederate kingdoms of Damascus and Samaria. Thus far the news was good, but Isaiah went on to announce something far less pleasant. Because of Ahaz's obstinacy, the overthrow of the two northern kingdoms would be followed by a time of unprecedented trouble for Judah as well, at the hands of the same Assyrian power, acting as the instrument of divine judgment. The land would relapse from an agricultural to a pastoral economy, and the child already mentioned would grow up to a diet of sour milk and honey, instead of the grain and wine and oil which the land normally produced.

## 2. The Sign

BUT THE PROPHECY contains emphases which go far beyond this. First of all, the prophecy is intended to be the announcement of a *sign*. Ahaz had been encouraged to ask for a sign, no matter how miraculous his chosen sign might be. When he refused to ask for one, he was told that the Lord Himself would give a sign. And certainly the sign that God undertook to supply would not be less impressive than any that Ahaz was likely to seek. But if the words that follow upon this announce-

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# Isaiah's Virgin Oracle — Continued

ment of a divine sign mean no more than that Syria and Ephraim would be overrun by the Assyrians within two or three years, and that Judah herself would suffer from the same scourge, then we may say that there is nothing of the nature of a sign here, but simply a more detailed repetition of the assurance given in verses 8 and 9, immediately before the sign was offered.

We have been led to expect a sign so impressive as to be a veritable portent, and the solemn phraseology with which the God-given sign is introduced encourages us to think of the conception and birth of the coming child as at least an essential feature of the sign. We have, in fact, a deliberate annunciation—the annunciation of a significant birth such as we find earlier in the Old Testament in the nativity narratives of Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Samson, and Samuel. So far as the language is concerned, parallel annunciations appear in extra-biblical literature, both Semitic and non-Semitic. In Semitic literature, the Ugaritic texts found at Ras Shamra provide us with some striking parallels; among non-Semitic texts we think especially of Virgil's *Fourth Eclogue,* where the verbal similarity is in places so close that some scholars have tried to show that the Latin poet might, directly or indirectly, have been dependent on Isaiah. But an annunciation of this kind draws our attention to the child who is to be born. A child whose birth is specially foretold in these terms is no ordinary child. Isaiah's utterance cannot be satisfactorily interpreted as referring merely to any child, to be conceived and brought to birth in the near future by any young woman.

### 3. The Child

THE CHILD is to be a boy, and his name (given him by his mother, according to the Massoretic text) is to be the significant one of Immanuel, "With us is God." The fact that he is to receive a significant name of this kind, embodying a divine assurance conveyed through the prophet, has led some expositors to think of him as one of Isaiah's sons. For we know of two sons of Isaiah who bore such names: one, Shear-jashub, who accompanied his father on the present occasion; the other, Maher-shalal-hash-baz ("Hasten-booty-speed-spoil"), who was born a little later. Both these boys, bearing names which expressed constant themes of their father's ministry, were, together with the prophet himself, "for signs and wonders in Israel from Jehovah of hosts, who dwelleth in mount Zion" (Isa. 8:18). But the whole force of the birth-oracle is against the supposition that the promised child will be the prophet's son, and that the *'almah* is his wife. Whatever the precise force of *'almah* may be, it is hardly appropriate for a woman who is already a mother; and the record of the conception, birth and naming of Isaiah's son Maher-shalal-hash-baz in Ch. 8:1-4 is cast in a different pattern from the annunciation of Ch. 7:14-17. Moreover, the book of Isaiah contains further information about the child Immanuel which excludes the idea that he could be a member of Isaiah's household.

Immanuel is the rightful heir to the land—not only the truncated realm of Judah but the whole land of Israel, probably in the dimensions which it attained in the time of David and Solomon (Ch. 8:8). He is a clearly defined personality; his very name, bringing to the people the assurance that God is with them no matter what the immediate future may hold in store, becomes a battle-cry of triumph (Ch. 8:10); and his character and activity correspond to his name, for he is the divinely appointed defender and deliverer of his people. He is to be looked for, not in any Israelite family chosen at random, not in the family of Isaiah, but in the royal house of David. Yet he cannot be identified with any known member of David's line in the eighth century B.C. Hezekiah cannot come into consideration here; the chronology by itself is sufficient to put this beyond question, for Hezekiah must have been born several years before the Syro-Ephraimite crisis. Nor are other attempted identifications with contemporaries of Isaiah any happier. What W. A. Wordsworth has to tell us in *En-Roeh* (Edinburgh, 1939) about Menahem, the ill-starred son of Hezekiah, sacrificed to Molech by his grandfather Ahaz, and Jesus, a descendant of David through Nathan (*cf.* Luke 3: 29), born to Eliezer by Hosea's daughter Lo-ruhamah, belongs to the realm of poetical imagination, not historical fact. But we need not look beyond Isaiah's own prophecies to establish the child's identity. For H whose name means "God is with us and to whom the land of Israel belong can be no other than the prince of th four names of Ch.9:6 f., the Spirit-en dowed shoot from Jesse's stock Ch. 11:1 ff., and the righteous king Ch. 32:1. (It would take us too fa beyond our present limits to show h further identification with the Servan of Ch. 42:1 ff.) The child is, in fac the expected prince of the house David through whom the sure co enant-promises made by God to Davi in II Sam 7:10 ff. and elsewhere are t be fulfilled. For a short time ther might have been ground for hopin that these promises would be realize under Solomon, but it became increas ingly plain towards the end of So omon's reign, and still more so whe the kingdom was divided after h death, that their fulfilment must depen upon a greater than Solomon. T Isaiah it was given, in an hour o ruin and despair, to descry with eve increasing clearness the lineaments this coming king, who embodied th assurance that God had not forsake His people but would at length accom plish their redemption and restoratio

But the relevance of the Immanu prophecy as a sign *to Ahaz* lies, George Adam Smith finely puts it, in th fact that "Ahaz by his unbelief had n only *disestablished* himself (ver. 9 he had mortgaged the hope of Israel Among the disasters which his appe to the Assyrian king would bring upo his land, the one chosen to brin home to him "his resolve's exceedin pregnancy of peril" is this: that whe the time comes for the long-expecte Saviour of David's line to be born, h will grow up, not to the conditions prosperous abundance pictured Psalm 72, "but to the food of privation to the sight of his country razed by h enemies into one vast common fit onl for pasture, to loneliness and suffe ing" (*The Book of Isaiah* i [Londo 1927], pp. 114 f.). Such will be th effect of Ahaz's folly on Immanuel heritage.

### 4. The Mother

BUT THE SIGN is not exhauste in the child; his mother too has h part to play in its significance. She not ANY *'almah;* she is THE *'alma* Now, to be sure, the Hebrew artic here may have a function for which w should not use the definite article

glish. "Peculiar to Hebrew is the ployment of the article to denote a gle person or thing (primarily one ich is as yet unknown, and there- e not capable of being defined) as ng present to the mind under given cumstances. In such cases in Eng- t the indefinite article is mostly used" esenius-Kautzsch, *Hebrew Grammar*, g. tr. [Oxford, 1898], pp. 427 f.; A. B. Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax* dinburgh, 1924], p. 26). This is mmonly given as the explanation of article before *'almah* in Isa. 7:14 . Gesenius-Kautzsch and Davidson, *c. citt.*) It is possible, however, to lerstand the article otherwise, if iah's words alluded to an oral tra- ion of "messianic" expectation h which his hearers were familiar. d this supposition is supported by passage in the book of Isaiah's con- mporary Micah, where the desolation viewed as continuing "until the time t she who travaileth hath brought th; then the residue of his brethren ll return unto the children of Is- l" (Mic. 5:3). Micah's words "she o travaileth" surely refer to a figure least to some extent identifiable by people to whom he spoke; and when look at their context, it is difficult to id the conclusion that the person licated is the mother of the "ruler in ael" who is to come forth from Beth- em, the shepherd-king who is to "be at unto the ends of the earth," the n who "shall be our peace" (verses 4, 5). But this deliverer must be the me as the deliverer repeatedly por- yed by Isaiah; "she who travaileth" Micah must therefore be the same the *'almah* of Isaiah, and in both acles the reference is to a promise not mpletely unknown, to an expectation t was at least in the air.

And now we may consider the dis- ted term *'almah*, which we have left translated hitherto. It occurs in ght other places in the Hebrew Bible. one of these (Gen. 24:43, referring Rebekah) the LXX renders it *par- enos* ("virgin"), as here. In four aces (Ex. 2:8; Ps. 68:25; Cant. 1:3; 8) the LXX renders it by *neanis* 'young woman"), the word by which is rendered here in the later Greek rsions of Aquilia, Theodotion and mmachus. As for the three remain- g places, the LXX rendering is *kry- hios* ("secret") in the title of Ps. 46, *eotes* ("time of youth") in Prov. 30: 9, and the transliteration *alaimoth* in Chr. 15:20. The English word "maiden" is probably the most suitable rendering throughout. Where a girl's virginity is definitely stressed, *bethulah* is the term used. (It is used of a young bride in Joel 1:8, but perhaps there she is viewed as only betrothed, her marriage not yet consummated.) In general it is true to say that in the Bible *'almah* implies maidenhood or virginity, while *bethulah* asserts it.

Should the implication of maidenhood be stressed in Isa. 7:14? The earliest Greek translators appear to have thought so, when they rendered the word by *parthenos*.[1] It is possible that the messianic expectation to which the oracle appealed was already bound up with the idea of a virgin-mother; this cannot be proved. But the fact that the context of the oracle leads us to expect a specially impressive sign from God supports the interpretation which finds explicit reference to a virgin-mother. Moreover, the very terms of the annunciation follow an ancient Semitic form used for the solemn proclamation of a virginal conception and birth. The most striking example of this form is perhaps found in the Ugaritic poem on "The Wedding of Nikkal and Yarih," which opens with an annunciation of the birth of the hero Nikkal. In this annunciation we find the parallel statements "A virgin will give birth" (line 5) and "Lo a maid will bear a son" (line 7), where the words rendered "virgin" and "maid" are the Ugaritic cognates of *bethulah* and *'almah* respectively.[2] The natural inference is that in such a context these two terms are used synonymously and interchangeably. In adducing this parallel we must emphasize that we use it as a parallel of form only, not of substance. But the form of Isaiah's prophecy, we suggest, would in itself suggest a supernatural event of this kind.

1. Professor H. M. Orlinsky, writing on "The Hebrew Text and the Ancient Versions" in *An Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh, 1952), holds that the LXX originally had *neanis* here, and that Aquila later restored this rendering in place of *parthenos* "which the Christians had substituted for it" (p. 30). With great respect to Professor Orlinsky's reputation as a Septuagint expert, we are not aware of any evidence suggesting that the LXX ever had anything but *parthenos* in Isa. 7:14. His charge of Christian substitution here seems to be as groundless as was Justin Martyr's charge of Jewish corruption in Ps. 96:10.

2. *Cf.* C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Handbook* (Rome, 1947), p. 152; *Ugaritic Literature* (Rome, 1949), pp. 63f.

## 5. The Fulfilment

NOW ALL THIS is come to pass," says the First Evangelist, relating the circumstances of our Lord's birth, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel'; which is, being interpreted, God with us" (Matt. 1:22 f.). Is this simply a verbal parallel on which the Evangelist has laid hold in order to embellish his narrative with an Old Testament quotation? No; for he is telling of the birth of the Lord's Anointed, the Son of David in whom all the holy and sure blessings promised to David found their fulfilment, the long-awaited champion and deliverer who accomplished an unparalleled salvation on His people's behalf, the conquering Seed of the woman who at the same time was and remains, not merely by the assurance conveyed in His name, but by His divine-human person, Immanuel, God-with-us. One historical birth and one only has fully satisfied the oracle of Isa. 7:14, and that is the birth of Jesus Christ.

> "This then must be considered as a fixed principle, that in order to enjoy the light of true religion, we ought to begin with the doctrine of heaven; and that no man can have the least knowledge of true and sound doctrine, without having been a disciple of the Scripture. Hence originates all true wisdom, when we embrace with reverence the testimony which God had been pleased therein to deliver concerning himself."
>
> —JOHN CALVIN, *Institutes*, 1, 6, ii.

# The Range of Mission Strategy

by ABEL POEL

IN AN article appearing in last month's *Journal* I argued that educational and medical work had a proper and important place within the total mission enterprise. I should like now to inquire whether mission strategy may range over an even larger field than I have indicated. If in missions one may go beyond the direct preaching of the Gospel by engaging in educational and medical work, may one go even farther?

I can see where we might develop a service of mercy for the blind or lepers, or even orphans, in certain localities. This might be unavoidable and necessary. Surely this would have Scriptural precedent in Jesus' own miracles. It would be a demonstration of the love of God. Through such activity we could break down superstition and point men to the cause of all misery, namely sin, and to the final victory over sin and sickness in Christ.

Naturally where educational and medical work have developed there will of necessity be administrative work. Thousands of dollars are needed for the work every year. Books must be kept and there will be the need for a mission business office. Then the increased staff demands added homes and facilities, and so industrial workers are needed.

It should be stated, however, that the business administration must only be a means to make the wheel of mission activity run more smoothly. This phase of the work must not become so important that it overshadows the essential task. The business administration must free the hands of the missionaries by lifting the burden of business detail. This is necessary so that the missionary may have more time for the essential task. At the same time it expedites the educational and medical and any other associate services. These things I say as a matter of policy. It we do not see this clearly there will arise many conflicts.

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PROF. BAVINCK, speaking of essential service and associate services in his work, *Zending in een Wereld in Nood,* has the following to say. The translation is by Dr. J. C. DeKorne and is quoted from *The Banner* of Dec. 7, 1946. "*. . . . . I am of the opinion that instead of speaking of principal service and auxiliary services we should speak of essential service and associated services (kerndienst en nevendiensten).*

*"The essential service is the official ministry of the Word (preaching, catechizing) and of the sacraments. Around this lies the broad area of the proclamation of the gospel in other ways. I am thinking, for example, of Bible lessons in school, of Bible stories in the hospital, of the prayer before an operation, of the Sunday School, of manual training clubs at which a message from the gospel is brought, etc. I am thinking also of the spread of the gospel through books and tracts. None of that is "official" missionary work, it does not have to be done by an ordained minister, but it is nevertheless necessary and important. Along the same lines is the manifestation of compassion in hospitals, homes for the poor, etc. Basis of it is pity for human misery. Moved by the love of Christ we want to bring relief from that misery, hoping at the same time that they who receive this relief will ultimately receive Him who can bring them relief from the far greater misery of sin. Finally, educational work fits into this entire scheme, as an effort to bring the new light of the gospel to bear upon all of life.*

*"It is important to remember that in the actual practice of mission work, these various services are constantly intermingled. The nurse who binds a patient's wound preaches by her deeds; this is an auxiliary service. When she reads a portion of the Word of God to her patient or prays with him, she is engaged in the principal service of mission work. When the ordained missionary administers the Lord's Supper he is engaged in official essential service. When he inspects the school or engages or dismisses a teacher he is engaged in auxiliary service. These various services can therefore be distinguished b they may never be separated. Our mi sionary task is a unit. The separa sections of the task fit together as piec of a mosaic, together they form t greater unity of the preaching of t gospel by word and by deed."*

AT THIS TIME I should like interject one fact which I deem ve *fundamental.* Our primary aim is t glory of God through the establishi of His kingdom and building up His church. This will be especially a complished through the bringing in His sheep chosen from before the fou dation of the world. In the accomplis ing of this our great duty it is necessa that we become witnesses. Thus Jes exhorts His disciples, "Ye shall be w nesses unto me." (Acts 1:8) *Our me ical and educational and all other m sion endeavors must contribute to th witness for Christ or else they cease be missionary in the Scriptural sens* Thus educational or medical work any other activity to be in the ran of mission strategy must be inherent a witness in itself. In all our missio ary work we must be seeking to ma Christ known. A missionary is expe ted to be a witness for Christ. This to be done by word and deed.

What then, in sum, is the range our mission activity backed by Scri tural precedent? We have seen that t essential service is the official minist of the Word (preaching, catechizing and the Sacraments. *Proceeding fro this* is the proclamation of the Gosp or use of the Word especially by u ordained workers, although the o dained minister will also share in th work. Under this would be includ the work of Bible women, interpreter the Sunday School teaching, devotio in the dormitories, reading of Chri tian stories to the children, ward ser ices in the hospital, etc. *Then also pr ceeding from this official ministry* the Word and Sacraments would be t manifestation of compassion—preac ing by words and deeds in the hospita *Also proceeding from this same cent* comes educational work, seeking bring the Gospel to bear on all of li All of this bearing the form of witne sing for Christ.

But are there still other activities? es the range of mission activity in- de agriculture, political activity, olishing a newspaper, going into siness such as having trading posts, going into a specialized social pro- m, etc.?

cannot see any of this coming into range of mission strategy unless der extreme or emergency condi- ns. A missionary may need to help ne families in his territory when eco- mic conditions become unbearable social conditions become impossible. er all, Christian missions must make ir impact felt by being a witness in rd and deed. As Bavinck writes, lissions can take advantage of many portunities to say in a fresh way and l it with deeds that Christ makes things new." Yet all such will be a nporary emergency service. I think is correct to say that Scriptural pre- dent will not permit the Church to *ter officially* into any kind of enter- ise just to form a contact for mission deavor. *The range of our mission tivity will arise out of the official oclamation of the Word and in each stance it will take the inherent form witnessing.*

Thus it would not seem to be lawful open a general store or trading post the Indian field or any other field st to lure Indians in and then preach them. There must be a witness in e work itself such as there is in med- al and educational work and it must ise out of the official proclamation of e Word. Buying and selling or plant- g crops, etc. is not a witness in it- lf. It is true that buying and selling in a trading post could be an ex- mple of honesty and integrity but that ample could also be given by a man ho is not a Christian. This does not rise out of the official preaching of the ord and is not inherently a witnessing f the Gospel. When I speak of "in- erent" I mean that witnessing belongs its very nature: it exists in it as a ermanent attribute.

I DO NOT believe Scripture would arrant expanding the missionary en- rprise in any manner or in any di- ection that is deemed morally unob- ectionable. The expanding of our mis- ion activity must be vitally connected vith our essential service—the official ninistry of the Word and Sacraments. This ministry is the hub of the wheel f mission strategy and all other en- deavors proceed from it. The mission- ary must be central. I think it is alto- gether wrong when at a mission institu- tion the missionary has little or no su- pervision over the Bible courses taught in the school. All spiritual activity should be under the supervision of the missionary. This should be true for the school as well as the hospital. All must center about the official preaching of the Word and Sacraments. *This is* the hub of the wheel of mission strat- egy.

Perhaps I could sum up my views on the range of mission strategy as sup- ported by Scriptural precedent by us- ing the illustration of a wheel.

The *axle* is the Word of God. Around that all mission endeavor turns.

The *hub* of the wheel is the official ministry of the Word and Sacraments.

Connected with this are various *spokes.*

The First spoke is the use of the Word (or proclamation of the Gospel) especially by unordained workers al- though ordained missionaries will share in it. This is bringing the Word as through the Sunday School, devo- tions in the dormitories and dining room, ward meetings in the hospital, work of the Bible women, etc.

The Second spoke is Medical work, which is preaching especially by deeds and is a manifestation of the love and mercy of Christ.

The Third spoke is Educational work, which seeks to make the Gospel bear on all of life.

The Fourth spoke is the publishing of tracts and mission literature. This I believe would be very important in some mission fields if they had no pub- lishing company to publish in the lan- guage of the people. Now all of this is vitally a part of witnessing. Each spoke takes the form of witnessing for Christ and all flow from the central task.

Business administration is not a spoke in the wheel for it is not inher- ently a witnessing. As I said before, its task is to lift the burden of the business detail from the missionary's shoulders so he may have more time for the es- sential task. Thus it can be a big as- set to the mission endeavor. Activities such as agriculture, trading store, etc., do not flow inherently from the central task, and witnessing would only be a sideline.

Finally, the rim of the wheel into which all the spokes of mission strategy flow I would call—the building up of the church of Christ and the establish- ment of God's Kingdom, and radiating from all this—yes, above all—the *glory of God.*

This picture of the range of mission strategy in my opinion is in keeping with Scriptural precedent and does not conflict with the spiritual nature of the Church, nor with its task,—preaching and teaching the Gospel (Matt. 28:19, Luke 24:47). It is surely faithful to the great duty given by Christ—"And ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8).

The chief power of his sermons lay, not in choice of language, nor turning of sentences, nor originality of simile and metaphor, but in their fulness of thought and striking argument, in their noble spontaneity, as of classic days, in their adaptation, and in the fresh bouyant style of delivery, like a stream that has burst through its rocky barrier, gushing forth from the very depths of his heart.

"I speak," he said, "as the fountains bubble, and still con- tinue to bubble, though none will come to draw. I preach as the rivers flow, the same though no one drink of their flood of waters."

*Said of John Chrysostom,*
*the Golden Voice of 4th century.*

# Confusion on the Union Issue

by SIMON J. DE VRIES*

DURING the last few days of this past January my consistory received from the Synodical Committee on Labor Matters a questionnaire requesting its opinion on the labor matters now before the Church.

I regret to say that my consistory was not able to give this questionnaire the attention its importance warranted because an answer was requested by March 1, too soon to allow for the careful study which the questionnaire required. I wonder now whether other consistories received this questionnaire as late as did my own. If so, it would seem that Synod's committee expected the impossible. How can a consistory make a thorough and intelligent study of union constitutions and policies, work through the bulky material referred to it by Synod for evaluation, and be ready to offer an informed and well-considered opinion in slightly more than a month's time? All the consistories, classes, and synods of the Christian Reformed church since 1881 have been trying to solve the labor problem. Will our Synod now prize the hasty judgments which came from the consistories under such a request as this? It is to be hoped that the "evaluation" which the committee made of these answers before the March 15 Agenda deadline was more carefully weighed than the answers themselves could possibly be.

While making criticisms of the committee's tardiness, another criticism ought to be made. By its tardiness, the committee may have contributed *indirectly* to greater confusion in our denomination on the union issue; in a second matter the committee may have contributed *directly* to such confusion. I have in mind its second question: "Is it your conviction that Synod should reaffirm the decisions of 1943, 1945, and 1946?" Is this proper? Is it right for the Synod, through its committee, to ask its constituent consistories to evaluate its own decisions, and to disagree with them if they see fit to do so? No one has asked Synod to do this. If a minor assembly had formally requested such a re-evaluation, it might be justified. But this is not the case. When we refuse to accept a former synod's decisions as settled and binding (except for weighty reason), we are only adding to confusion and uncertainty.

Perhaps Synod's committee did the best it could under the circumstances. Perhaps it could do no better, considering the vagueness of Synod's own decisions on the union issue last June, and the unclarity of its purpose as reflected in the mandate given to this committee.

* * *

I HAD the privilege of being a delegate to the Synod of 1953. A young minister's first synod is a thrilling and enriching experience. He learns at first hand how our highest assembly deals with the various knotty problems which confront it. It is indeed an education to learn by personal participation how the decisions of the Church are made. I am happy to say that I profited much from the discussions and from the fellowship, and I believe myself to be richer for the experience.

However, there was one matter claiming Synod's attention concerning the handling of which I was troubled. It was the labor-union issue. With the other delegates I carefully studied the problems which were facing Synod on this issue and I tried to do my bit in finding a solution to them. But Synod seemed to become confused and involved as it entered into the debate. The motion which finally gathered the majority of "ayes" did not seem to me to meet the situation. It seemed to be a move of desperation. Synod apparently could not see the light, and so it decided to appeal to the consistories.

Thus at Synod I was confused. I suspected that *this* was not a model of how our major assembly should operate. Since Synod adjourned I have been trying to analyze what was at fault, and gradually an opinion has crystallized. I would refrain from expressing that opinion publicly, realizing my limitations of years and experience, were I not concerned about the confusion which seems to prevail among our people concerning this vital matter. It is this consideration which prompts me to offer the following opinions for what ever they may be worth.

It appears to me that there are basically two causes for our Church's present confusion: a general or underlying cause and a cause that is specific and immediate. The immediate cause is the way the advisory committee presented its material to Synod, and of this there will be discussion below. The general or underlying cause with which I propose to deal first, is the perpetual debate which has been going on in our denomination about labor unions and the uncertainties which this debate has engendered. It has been with the labor issue as with the matter of divorce. Synod's position has suffered so many vacillations that our churches have become more and more confused.

### Synod's Labor Decisions

MANY synods of the Christian Reformed Church have concerned themselves with the problem of Christian membership in the labor unions of our land. This matter was discussed in 1881, 1883, 1886, 1890, 1892, 1900, 1902, 1904, 1906, 1914, 1916, 1924, 1928, 1930, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1950, 1951, 1952, and 1953. As one examines the decisions of these various synods, it becomes apparent to him that there have existed two distinct schools of thought on the matter from the very beginning. Through the years first one position, then the other prevailed. At first our church was rather naive in its answers, but as it looked more deeply into the complicated problems involved its statements became increasingly detailed and relevant. An item worthy noting is that our synods have consistently refused to deliver a condemnatory judgment concerning any specific union in all the years of our existence except in 1886, when "The Knights of Labor" was condemned, at least partially on the ground that it was a secret society.

After vacillations of attitude toward the unions, our Church reached what might be called a practical solution of its differences in its decisions of 1916, 1928, and 1930. These decisions were

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firmed by the synods of 1943, 1945, 1946, after an intervening period which an attempt was made to get od to legislate the members of our rch into a Christian union. This mpt was firmly rebuffed. The de- ons of these synods, which ought by counts to be considered as the basic ition of our church on unions, are result of years of careful thought l mature consideration, and are sub- ntiated by reference to Scripture. ese decisions are embodied in the ee main ideas contained in the state- nt of the Synod of 1946: (1) the nciple that Christian membership in tral unions is allowable, so long as h unions "give no constitutional rrant to sin, and do not show in their gular activities that they champion or that they are in conflict with the iversal principles of justice contained the Word of God;" (2) carefully fined principles of corporate respon- ility which apply to church members o are members of objectionable ions; and (3) the ideal of distinc- ely Christian unions. Though these ee ideas appear in varying forms and ationships in the decisions of the fferent synods, it is basically they ich determine our accepted policy.

Crucial in discussion of the union is- e has been the concept of "neutral" ions. It appears upon careful inspec- n that there has been some inconsis- ncy in the declarations of Synod in e definition of this concept. Often r synodical declarations have seemed apply the idea to *all* non-Christian bor organizations, both to "neutral" nions in which Christian membership as allowable, (i. e., such as give no nstitutional warrant to sin nor open- champion unchristian practices in eir regular activities), and to "neu- al" unions which have made them- lves objectionable for Christian mem- rship by adopting such ungodly prin- ples and methods. This seems to be ie idea of 1953, for example. How- ver, other synods have tended to re- trict the term "neutral" specifically to ich unions as do not officially assume n anti-Christian character, the impli- ation being that unions which do be- ome officially anti-Christian forfeit the ight to be spoken of any longer as neutral." Recognizing that such nions can indeed not properly be con- idered neutral, the Synod of 1946 clar- fied the proper use of this concept by estricting it for all practical purposes o unobjectionable unions alone. What was said in 1946 ought to be carefully observed by all, because this statement is the latest, and presumably the official, synodical definition of the concept "neutral":

> *Art.* 141, 1, B., 1, A., 1: *Becoming a member of such a so-called neutral labor union does not as such constitute a sinful act, inasmuch as according to Synod's circumscription such unions as here meant give no constitutional warrant to sin, and do not show in their regular activities that they champion sin or that they are in conflict with the universal principles of justice contained in the Word of God.*

In the light of this official synodical definition, the position taken by Mr. Joseph Gritter in his letter to the 1953 Synod is patently mistaken. Note how Mr. Gritter wants to alter Synod's meaning:

> By neutral organizations in which membership is permissable Synod definitely had in mind organizations which, although they may not have commitment to the authority of God and obedience to His word definitely stated in their Constitutions, in their conduct and common practices give evidence of assent to such authority and the guidance of the word of God. (Acts, p. 409.)

But that is not what Synod said. And that is not what Synod meant, if we may judge by the plain meaning of the record.

Thus the synods of 1943, 1945, and 1946 gave our denomination workable principles. But dissatisfaction remained with certain individuals and groups. Since 1946 the issue has cropped up anew and has become increasingly agitated up until the present. Very likely the reason for this continuing unrest is the failure of our Church to define satisfactorily the Christian's responsibility in social action. Perhaps our greatest hope for ultimate solution of the union issue lies in the discussions which are presently beginning on this specific problem.

At any rate, Synod has had no peace of late years, but has had to deal with continuing agitation for a change of position. Members of the CLA have petitioned Synod; the labor policy problem connected with the Calvin building program has clamored for solution; and in 1953, two of our Canadian classes presented similar overtures calling upon Synod to condemn the neutral unions. The result has been a new wave of uncertainty and confusion.

## Report of the Advisory Committee, 1953

Such was the situation which faced the Synod of 1953. Doubtless its members looked hopefully to its advisory committee for good advice as to how to answer the various documents before it. Unfortunately Synod was disappointed in this expectation; and here we must point to what seems to be the immediate and specific cause of our present confusion. Undoubtedly the advisory committee did its conscientious best in trying to serve Synod with good advice, but the fact is that its report committed rather serious errors which made it virtually impossible for Synod to come to a clear and satisfying solution of the issues before it.

What the advisory committee should have done is to have summarized clearly and fairly the position and request of each of the documents before Synod, and then, in respect to each document, to have presented clear recommendations with well-considered grounds. Only this method would have been just and fair both to the documents concerned and to the various viewpoints represented among the delegates at Synod.

It is impossible to say that the advisory committee report fulfilled this requirement. First, it presented an unfortunately biased summary of the majority and minority positions contained in the report of the study committee on labor policy. It said: "The majority submits a plan which is intended to resolve the problem *without compromising our stand on the labor question.* The minority recommends that Synod *completely ignore its present position* . . ." (Acts 1953, Art. 146, p. 122 top; italics mine, SJD.) As a summary of opposing positions, this statement is extremely prejudicial. *Both* reports contended that they were consistently following the official position; and in the light of what has been written above, it would appear that the minority had strong justification for believing this. Yet the advisory committee already prejudged the issue in its summary.

Probably a more serious error committed by this advisory committee was that of misjudging its function and authority. It virtually constituted itself

a study-committee with power to make original recommendations to Synod, advising Synod with regard to certain items which were not before that body in any of the documents before it. We think of the criticism recently voiced by Rev. John Gritter in his article on "Advisory Committees at Our Synods," appearing in the August, 1953, *Reformed Journal*. The author of that article did not specifically mention the advisory committee now under discussion, but it is not unlikely that he was thinking of it when he posited the principle: "We should not give to these committees the work and dignity which properly belongs to standing committees and study committees. . . .The advisory committees ought not to usurp the place and the work and the dignity of these standing committees." Thus the committee in question undertook to reconstruct the material contained in all the documents before Synod into three questions, thereby failing to distinguish the logical and official priority of the study-committee report over the overtures, and that of the overtures over the private communication of Mr. Joseph Gritter.

A third fault of the report is that it commits a basic self-contradiction. There is an unresolvable conflict between its recommendation 1-a and its recommendations 1-b and 2-c. The first recommendation is to "reaffirm the position of our church expressed in 1943, 1945, and 1946." Well and good. The committee was on good ground in advising the maintenance of our official position. But note well: 1943 reaffirms 1916, 1928, and the conclusions of 1930! Certainly, among all that is adopted on the labor issue by these six synods, the statement which is the most consistently reaffirmed is that membership is allowable in unions which do not constitutionally or officially champion sin. The Synod of 1946 took the position that only such unions may be properly called neutral. Yet the advisory committee goes on to recommend in 1-b and 2-c that "neutral" unions be "disapproved." Perhaps in 1-b the committee was confused by Synod's former ambiguity concerning the meaning of the designation "neutral," since they use this term for organizations which they allege to be unsatisfactory in "constitution and policies." In this case the contradiction would not be a direct one. But the committee makes its understanding of "neutral" altogether clear in 2-c, showing there that it means by that term all non-Christian unions, thereby diametrically contradicting recommendation 1-a. For in 2-c we find that the committee recommends:

> That Synod, none-the-less, declare that the principles of God's Word respecting labor relations must be maintained and that in our present circumstances this can be done only by opposing the neutral unions of our day and supporting the Christian Labor Association.

Still another criticism which ought to be brought against the advisory committee report concerns its presentation of charges against the "neutral" unions in recommendation 1-b. These charges are virtually identical with those contained in the Canadian overtures. Certain serious strictures must be placed against them. For one thing, they attempt to reason from the part to the whole, i. e., to blame every branch of a wide-flung organization for the aberrations of some of its constituents. The simple fact is that there are too many locals in the AFL and CIO which are not guilty of the acts mentioned to allow a blanket-condemnation. Another criticism is that the charges are made in colored, prejudicial terms. Note point 5, where "intimidation," "coercion," and "persecution" are lumped together. Our Synod of 1914 had the good sense to realize the distinction made by Rev. J. Groen between "force" and "violence." Certainly our synodical statements ought to avoid emotional terms. Too much in the practical existence of our laboring-men is at stake to allow such freighted language to play a part in determining our decisions. Further, it must be pointed out that the report takes the trouble to call various practices objectionable which the law itself condemns. Naturally these are objectionable from the Christian viewpoint if the government itself finds it necessary to condemn them: but the question is, are these regular and official acts, and are they carried out consistently by the neutral unions as a whole? We want the proof. Moreover, these charges condemn certain practices of unionism which, though perhaps dubious, are at any rate debatable. Thus neither the overtures nor the advisory committee report has come to Synod with such definite and circumstantial evidence as would warrant such a blanket condemnation as they recommend.

A further weakness of the report might be pointed out. In its recommendations 1-c and 2-e, it unnecessarily multiplies rules by advising the restating of rules already adopted by Synod. Besides, the parallel it draws between the Christian School movement and the Christian labor movement is certainly open to question; but that is another matter, and this article is primarily interested in methodological errors appearing on the record.

### Evidences of Synod's Confusion

Synod doomed its hopes of coming to clarity when it accepted its advisory committee's report. If various delegates recognized at the moment the report's presumptiveness, self-contradiction, and lack of precision, Synod as such did not seem to realize these faults. Accordingly, its debate on the union issue became hopelessly confused and futile.

The "Rules for Synodical Procedure" contain the following stipulation: "With respect to the reports submitted to Synod that are given into the hands of advisory committees, the recommendations of these synodical committees shall have precedence, if the recommendations of the advisory committee are radically different" (p. 15). Common observance of this rule has provided that radically-differing minority reports shall also have this precedence. Such was the case with the minority position of the 1953 study-committee report. It should therefore, have been given first opportunity on the floor of Synod. But what does the record show? It shows that Synod allowed its advisory committee to present its recommendations first. The record further shows that eventually the proper procedure managed to assert itself, so that belatedly the spokesman for the minority position was allowed to present his recommendation (Acts 1953, p. 122 bottom). It would indeed appear that Synod was confused.

A motion was made and supported to adopt the minority position, but it was tabled, and in its place a motion was made to adopt the first point of the advisory committee's recommendation. After lengthy debate, this motion too was tabled and Synod decided to refer the whole matter to the consistories.

haps this was the only way out for od in its predicament. But the pur- e of Synod in referring the matter the churches seems vague. What s Synod expect of the consistories? a large supply of local information ng to correct Synod's basic errors procedure? Synod has repeatedly intained that the consistories must ide in concrete cases whether a par- ular local union was to be con- nned, realizing its inability to make over-all judgment. But now Synod, ding itself unprepared to pass judg- nt, goes back to the consistories, ose duty it always has been to make crete decisions. Would it not appear t the limits of the practical possibil- s of synodical legislation re the on issue have already been passed? n the meantime, the more urgent tter of determining labor policy in ard to our denominational build- ings is set aside for another year. In view of what should have been, this delay seems utterly needless. Is it any wonder that many of our members have become dubious whether Synod can make up its mind, and whether the decisions of Synod can be relied upon?

* * *

### What Now?

How now is Synod to proceed with clearing up the present confusion on the labor-union issue? It would seem that Synod should do the following: first, receive the report of its present study-committee with greater regard than it showed the report of last year's study-committee. Further, Synod ought to recognize nonetheless the priority of last year's material and deal with it in due order and with due respect. And certainly, if Synod does anything, let it take careful note of the position of former synods; and then let it stand consistently on that position unless a conclusive case against it can be established. Thus, as it takes up the still-pending labor policy problem, let its decision be made in consistency with that position fairly and clearly interpreted.

Finally, one is prompted to ask whether we have not arrived at the point where further synodical legislation fails to help. Can we not expect rather that real and lasting progress toward the full solution of our union problems will be made through free and open discussion in a non-official, non-ecclesiastical way? May not reasonable and Spirit-led men be expected through free and unabashed discussion, to reject errors and make steady progress, though it be through difficulties, toward the longed-for solution?

# evision of the Form for the Lord's Supper

**by GEORGE STOB**

THE Christian Reformed Church in process of revising the Form for e administration of the Lord's Sup- r. For many years people have com- ined that the Form is too long, and th ministers and people have felt that heavy and involved literary structure ade it not only hard to read but also rd to follow and understand.

The 1952 Synod was overtured to ap- int a Committee to study the matter "revision and abbreviation." This as done. But the Committee did more an "study the matter." It produced d proposed two "revisions and ab- eviations," and made several recom- endations concerning Communion actice.

The Synod of 1953 took no action on is Report, but referred it to the chur- es for study. It also instructed the udy Committee "to solicit the com- ents of the consistories on their re- rt to the Synod of 1954."

### The Revisions

THE Committee submitted two visions of the now existing Form. One called the "long Form," and the other e "short Form."

The idea is that the "long Form" hall be read at the first Communion service. When a second Communion service is held on the same day, the "short Form" may be read at this service. Presumably, no minister would any longer be permitted to use his own abbreviation of the Form for the second service. This would be "unauthorized." Synod would adopt "an officially approved abbreviated Form," which would then be "authorized" for use in the second service. This is throwing out the lines of Synodical authority pretty far and pulling them pretty tight. But more about that later.

It may be noted that the proposed "long Form" is an abbreviation and revision of the now existing Form. The proposed "short Form" is an abbreviation of the proposed "long Form." But the abbreviation from the present form to the "long Form" is negligible, consisting only in the deletion of a few words here and there, and the elimination of the quotation of Christ's words at the institution of the Supper. So, too, the difference between the "long Form" and the "short Form" is negligible. In either case we are still left with liturgical forms which "tend to create weariness and dislike."

The revision consists mainly in the breaking down of some long sentences into a collection of shorter sentences, and a new statement of the list of "gross sins" which make unworthy of participation in the Lord's Supper.

The Committee felt there should be no "extensive abbreviation and revision of our beautiful and well-rounded Form," because this would "tend to mar its effectiveness and beauty." There is room for wide difference of opinion as to whether our present Form is "beautiful and well-rounded." Even so, there is some question whether the Committee's slight abbreviation and revision has left undisturbed either the quality or the sense of the old Communion Form. It would be well if someone should make a careful comparison of the old and new Forms, and note especially the change of emphasis, spirit, or sense that has been introduced by such deletions or revisions as the Committee has made. The findings, I suspect, would be interesting, and would help to make it quite clear that it is a risky thing to try to trim or prune down a literary or liturgical document.

The big thing, however, is that while something may have been lost in the Committee's revisions, nothing at all of what was so urgently desired has been gained. The revised Forms are still much too long for reading at a Com-

# Revision of the Form for the Lord's Supper — Cont.

munion service. The language is still heavy and cumbersome, and this has not been relieved by breaking up the long sentences into shorter ones. The revisions, I fear, have hardly served their purpose, and leave us still with a Form for the Lord's Supper which is liturgically not satisfactory.

### The "Preparatory Service"

IN connection with these proposed revisions, the Committee made some recommendations bearing on the practice of Holy Communion. One of these relates to the reading of the "preparatory part" of the Form at the preparatory service. This has become a widespread practice—mainly because it helps to relieve the monotony of reading the whole lengthy Form in one service. In justification it is noted that the first part of the Form deals with self-examination, which makes it most appropriate for reading on Preparatory Sunday.

The Committee disapproves of this practice, and recommends that the churches be advised to discontinue it. The Communion Form, it is said, is not adapted to this splitting into two parts. There is large room for dissent from this judgment. It can easily be maintained that the Communion Form is adapted to division into two parts. It has two distinct parts. The part dealing with self-examination, the exhortation to its exercise, and its purpose, is clearly distinct from the second part, dealing with the meaning of the Sacrament. The Form can very easily be adapted to a two-fold use, by separate reading of the first part on Preparatory Sunday.

And there is something eminently appropriate about the reading of the first part on Preparatory Sunday. The first part of the Form declares that for a right and fruitful celebration of the Holy Supper "it is necessary, before all things, rightly to examine ourselves." Why should not this urgent exhortation to self-examination be read as a guide to devout and honest preparation, and be read at a time when more than a few minutes can be given to this exercise.

As long as we are burdened with a Communion Form which is as long and heavy as the present Form or the proposed revisions, many churches will exercise the good sense of splitting the Form. And if a Consistory judges this practice most edifying for the congregation under its care, how shall it be prevented from so doing? It is inconceivable that any Classis or Synod would presume to impose upon any church an injunction against the divided reading of the Form.

It would seem more reasonable that Synod should advise all churches to follow that same practice, and perhaps provide a "Preparatory Form" that would serve the purpose even better than the first part of the present Form. This is being proposed for the revised Liturgy of the Reformed Church in America, which provides for a separate liturgy for "The Preparatory Service." This particular liturgy makes use of an adaptation of the first part of the Form for the Lord's Supper now in use among us and in the Reformed Church of America. The *Book of Common Prayer* (Episcopalian) has a beautiful and impressive "Exhortation" to self-examination, intended for reading on the Sunday or some other Holy Day immediately preceding the celebration of the Sacrament. Why should Synod disapprove a practice so appropriate, and one honored in the best liturgical traditions of the Church?

### The "Long" And the "Short"

THE Committee, as before observed, offers two revisions, one "long," and one "short." Churches have been in the habit of abbreviating the Form for reading in the second Communion service. The Committee doesn't think this "unauthorized" abbreviation is good, and now proposes that Synod adopt "an officially approved abbreviated Form which may be used at the second administration of the Sacrament." In order to prevent the churches from using the "abbreviated Form" regularly, the Committee wants Synod to "make the reading of the unabbreviated Form mandatory for the first administration of the Sacrament."

This doesn't look quite right. For one thing, it is highly questionable that Synod has a right to mandate any consistory against using a Form which Synod itself approves. If a Synodically approved Form is suitable for the worshippers who gather at an evening Communion, it is suitable also for those gathered at the morning Communion. And if a Consistory decides that the use of the "short Form" is best for the congregation, what right has any Synod order a consistory to use the "lo Form"?

What is more, there ought to be occasion for "long" and "short" Form Let the Church adopt a Form that simple, choice, and brief, and welcom for use at all Communion services. Form that is so "long" that for reaso of time or temper it needs "abbrevi tion," is not a good Form. And if w are concerned about uniformity in wo ship — how about promoting uniform ity within one congregation by the u in both Communion services of one a the same Form?

### The "Gross Sins"

A very interesting item is the Co mittee's proposed revision of the list "gross sins,"—"in more modern ter to meet our present situation."

The revision of the list of sins is thr fold:

(1) Some of the old sins are no lon er listed. For example, "all despise of God, of His Word, and of the ho sacraments," is eliminated, as also: "pe jurers," "murderers," "fornicators "drunkards," "thieves," "usurers." must have given the Committee a har time to know which sins to leave off th list, and it would be interesting to kno how in its judgments these omissio better "meet the present situation."

(2) Some of the old sins are give new names—usually certain abstractio are used to cover the Form's mentio of concrete and specific sins. For e ample: instead of "blasphemers," the is "all who take God's name in vain" instead of "fornicators, drunkard thieves, usurers, robbers," there "those who live in unchastity, inte perance, and dishonesty." All this h a more gentle and urbane sound. Th present list does sound pretty roug Whether the "refinement" is a gain not, is hard to say. Maybe if sins, th is "gross sins," are to be listed an how, they might as well be *named.*

(3) At least one new—perhaps "mo ern"—sin is added to the list of "gro sins." It is found in the phrase "a desecrators of the holy Sabbath." Th is abstract again, and could cover large variety of Sunday practices, d pending on the moral judgments pr vailing in any given church or co munity. It could make quite a numb of people pretty uncomfortable abo partaking of the Lord's Supper. Apa from that, one might wonder whet this is the only "modern" sin, or t

ost important "modern" sin which eds mention if our Form is to "meet present situation."

* * *

I wonder about this whole business of the listing of "gross sins." If ce you start a catalogue of sins, where you stop? Who can read hearts to ow which sins, modern or ancient, ed this special mention? How does e get at the elder who bribes the lice officer and fleeces his customer, at the minister whose office is for m only a matter of personal advantage d gain?

This listing has, I think, become our formed list of "mortal" sins. Sometnes it is more than broadly hinted at there is cause for discipline beuse a man is guilty of one of the ings mentioned in the Form for the ord's Supper. The good man who ds himself mentioned in this list of ross sins" might be put in mortal ead. The hypocrites who think they e not caught in the listing will devel a more Pharisaic spirit of self-comacency.

Perhaps there should be no listing. he point is not that there are certain ns ("mortal" or "gross") which make eople unworthy of the Lord's Supper, t that the wilful persistence in living nsciously in any sin makes one unfit d unworthy. The Committee's "short orm" reflects this judgment, since it aves out the listing and says merely: We also admonish all who know themlves to be defiled with wilful sins to bstain from the table of the Lord."

Better still, and quite more beautiful, the statement in the Presbyterian *ook of Common Worship*: "Not unto hose who live willingly in transgression nd offenses, holding fellowship with atred, malice, or impurity; nor unto hose who cherish pride and self-rightousness in their hearts, trusting secretly in their own works and merits, are hese benefits of Christ offered." Or, rom the *Book of Common Prayer*: For as the benefit is great, if with a rue penitent heart and lively faith we eceive that Holy Sacrament; so is the anger great, if we receive the same nworthily. Judge therefore yourselves, rethren, that ye be not judged of the ord; repent you truly for your sins ast; have a lively and steadfast faith n Christ our Savior; amend your lives, nd be in perfect charity with all men; o shall ye be meet partakers of these oly mysteries."

### Alternative to Revision

MAYBE it would have been well if the Committee had made more of the charge to "study the matter" of revision and abbreviation. If it had, it might possibly have given some thought to the consideration that there may be a better way for us than that of revising the old Form — and that is, the construction of a new Form.

Our Communion Form is one whose first origins date back to the 16th Century. It was written in the Dutch, out of the social and cultural as well as religious mentality of the times, and put in the heavy, argumentative language of a Church reacting not only against the corrupt ceremonialism of the Roman Catholic Church but also trying to maintain itself against the Lutherans and Anabaptists. Our Form is a translation of it. We are now attempting a revision of the translation of the old Dutch Form.

Why not a completely new Form, produced through the efforts of the best literary, liturgical, and theological minds of the Church, and drawing on the beauty and power of the liturgical treasures of the English and American, as well as Dutch, traditions?

In any event, we ought to try our hands and hearts and see what we can produce. If we are unable to produce anything worthy out of our own knowledge, experience, and response to the best traditions, we can still fall back again on what the fathers produced for their own day. But we should not too readily assume that no Church of the present can write beautiful and meaningful liturgies. We are nearly a hundred years old. If our fathers in their ecclesiastical infancy, could produce a church order and an extensive liturgy, we, at our age, ought to be able to produce at least one liturgical Form.

# LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

## ON DIVORCE

### IF . . .

IF YOU would have bought a new tire for your car the other day before you made that trip you would not have had a blowout when you struck that rough piece of road, and you would not have gone over the embankment, wrecking your car and breaking your leg. If I had told you this as I found you there crippled and sore, you probably would agree with me and admit your foolishness. And if a dozen of your neighbors had come that way and said the same thing to you, you would say: it is true. An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.

But would that ounce of prevention do you any good in your present situation? Not a bit. What you need now is the pound of cure, the repairing of your car and the setting of your limb. So, instead of every one upbraiding you, if one of us had taken you to a doctor and another had towed your car to a garage, that would have been much more to the point and you would have appreciated it.

Our admonitions, of course, were well meant, but they came too late, as they often do. Sometimes we ourselves are guilty of the same neglect. We want to fix the fence after the cows have broken out and two of them have bloated themselves in the neighbor's alfalfa, and we find them dead. Yes we sometimes forget about that ounce of prevention. But we usually have many excuses for our own neglect. We had meant to go to town in the morning and buy some new wire to fix that fence.

### BUT . . .

WE ARE now up against the facts as they have happened. And what are we going to do about it. Does it do any good always to dwell on *what should have been?* If we see our neighbor stumble should our first thought be to tell him that he should have taken better care or should we forbear to reproach and try to help him up?

Does it do any good for you to say that Bathsheba should have put up a screen, when she was washing herself, to prevent being observed? None at all, because the fact is that she did not do that and David saw her. Does it do any good to say that David should have gone out with his army, instead of loitering in Jerusalem? None whatever, because he *did* stay in Jerusalem and was enticed by what he saw. Either one of those would have prevented his

sin of adultery and subsequent murder. But both of those things *were* committed and all your putting up of screens comes too late.

So now what are you going to do with David? Will you condemn him to death as David himself did when Nathan presented the case to him in a figure of speech? And will you do so even after David repented and acknowledged his great sins before God? Or will you pardon his sins as God did when David admitted his guilt with deep regret? And after you have forgiven him will you then merely tolerate him and protest that he is not fit to be king any more because of the stain that will cleave to him? Or can you fully agree with him when, after confessing his great sins, he asks: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation". . . adding: "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways and sinners shall be converted unto Thee"? Do you notice the note of humility and joy when he says: "Lord, open thou my lips and my mouth shall show forth thy praise"?

The sins which were very great are condemned in strong language, but the repentant sinner is accepted and restored to full communion with God. Therefore he says: "Thou desirest not sacrifice, . . . The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51).

## THEREFORE . . .

IF DAVID was restored to blessed fellowship with God after repenting of his sins and if he was not called upon to make the sacrifice of his present marital union with Bathsheba, whom he took to be his wife after he had killed Uriah, was his sin lighter than the sin of so many in our present generation who after having been divorced from their first marriage partner are afterward married to another? We all agree that these are great sins in the sight of God, especially to break the marriage relationship, but we would hardly call them greater sins than those that David committed. In course of time David acknowledged his guilt before God and was forgiven, but will you in this 20th century exclude the possibility of sincere sorrow for and admission of the sin of breaking the marriage tie and taking another partner, even if the case should be that the second marriage was a happier one in many respects?

Or if you will admit the possibility of sincere sorrow in such a case, will you then demand the penance of a sacrifice (which David says that God does not want) and insist upon an impossible course, a course which neither you nor I would be able to pursue, if we love our wife or husband? Is there any place in Scripture where God requires such a course? You will find none. Would that glorify God and would that promote the welfare of a family if the father and mother live as strangers in one and the same house, or if one should live in one part of the world and the other elsewhere? Would that be conducive to leading a sanctified life?

The prophet Isaiah presents the Lord saying, "Come now, let us reason together (as in a court), though your sins be scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." There is no exemption of any condition made. *All* shall be as white as snow. Would you say that those who have been divorced and remarried cannot be made white? That the red will always show through and be a constant pink?

The Jews came to Jesus saying: this woman who was caught in adultery must die, according to the law of Moses. Jesus says: Go and stone her. But at that saying they all became uneasy and departed, leaving Jesus and the woman alone. Jesus asks her whether none had condemned her and she answers: "None Lord." Notice her calling him "Lord." Then Jesus said to her: "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." Jesus did not minimize the sin, but He confirms that which He said in another place; that "He was not sent to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

If Jesus extends his mercy to this woman and if He could offer the water of life freely to a woman whom He knew was living with a man who was not her husband, would you improve upon this attitude of Jesus by demanding a sacrifice which God nowhere in his word has required? Can you advance any other adequate grounds why penitent sinners should be barred from partaking of the Lord's table?

Or would you wash your hands of the whole affair and say that these people have knowingly put themselves in a position where they cannot repent, where they can go neither backward nor forward, and therefore you cannot take them into the fellowship of the Church, because of the constant pink stain cleaving to them?

Beware lest the Lord finds you saying in your hearts: I thank Thee Lord that I am not like this publican. Remember Jesus "came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Peter L. Van Dyken
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### CORRECTION

The editors regret the appearance of a typographical error in the article by Harry Boer on "Life in the Spirit" in the March issue of the Journal. The last line in column 1, page 4, reads: "I shall now enlarge upon the missionary significance of Pentecost." This should have read: "I shall *not* now enlarge upon . . . etc.

"If you desire to be extensively useful, do not spend your time and strength in contending for or against such things as are of a disputable nature, but in testifying against open and notorious evil and in prompting real spiritual holiness.

"Let us keep to this, leaving a thousand disputable points to those who have no better business than to toss the ball of controversy to and fro, and let us bear a faithful testimony in our several stations against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, and with all our might recommend that inward and outward holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

—JOHN WESLEY